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STATE FOR AF/W, INR/AA  
DOE FOR GEORGE PERSON

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TAGS: PGOV PHUM KDEM NI

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: DRL A/S KRAMER, DAS KRILLA MEET INEC

Classified By: CDA Walter N.S. Pflaumer for reasons 1.4. (b & d).

¶1. (C) Summary: On September 9 Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor David Kramer and DAS Jeffrey Krilla met with Chairman Maurice Iwu and four additional members of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC). Though the purpose of the meeting was to express the USG's dissatisfaction with the 2007 elections and to ask INEC what measures it is implementing to improve the electoral process, Iwu apparently hoped to spin the visit as evidence that the USG and A/S Kramer were endorsing INEC's work. He was clearly disappointed when A/S Kramer asked the press to leave at the start of the meeting, and reacted to our statements of disappointment by claiming that our sources of information on the elections were biased. He alleged that, no matter how many improvements INEC made, the USG would continue to condemn its work and demonize him. He continued on with this mendacious monologue for over an hour, saying that the election results reflected the "intent" of Nigerian voters and that INEC is "satisfied" with itself.  
End Summary.

¶2. (C) At the outset, it was apparent that INEC Chairman Iwu had assumed the meeting would be positive and congratulatory (or could be spun as such), as he had invited a room full of both broadcast and print journalists to cover the session. A/S Kramer, however, almost immediately politely asked that the press leave so we could have a working meeting. Once they had gone, and Iwu heard A/S Kramer express disappointment in the 2007 electoral process, the Chairman launched into a monologue for most of the next hour. He alleged that the USG only receives reports from biased sources, adding, "If you base your opinions on reports from NDI (National Democratic Institute), IRI (International Republican Institute), or civil society groups, then you are missing it."

¶3. (C) Iwu also claimed that international election observers had taken sides, had biased political interests, and expressed opinions that had been "bought" by some unknown source. He was dismissive of international criticism and said that some organizations deliberately tried to mock the Nigerian electoral system. He alleged that the USG has joined in a "mob" attitude, stating, "No matter how much we work to improve, the INEC chairmen become devils despite their credentials." Iwu also denied that the formation of the Electoral Reform Committee and the Electoral Tribunals' reversal of many results were indications of problems in the conduct of the elections. One of the other commissioners,

Dr. Mohammed Jumare, added that no electoral process was perfect, and asserted that Nigeria's electoral process was comparable to the 2000 U.S. Presidential election in Florida, a remark that prompted CDA to say it was time to end the meeting.

¶4. (C) Comment: Chairman Iwu and other INEC commissioners' comments were over the top and insulting. Iwu continues to ladle out this mendacious codswallop to visitors, further confirming our view that, so long as he and those of his ilk remain in charge of INEC, it is hard to see how the Commission could be seen by anyone as capable of mounting a credible election. End Comment.

PFLAUMER